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More Spies in the Sky

By Flora Lewis

PUGWASH, Nova Scotia, July 17 — There has been a strange cycle of public indifference and militant activity against the danger of nuclear arms since the first two were dropped. Distressed at failure to understand, Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein issued a dramatic manifesto in 1955.

That led to a meeting of top scientists from East and West at the boyhood home of Cyrus Eaton, the late U.S. industrialist, in 1957. So was founded the Pugwash Conference.

For its 25th anniversary, the conference is here again. The two signatories of the Russell-Einstein document still alive, Linus Pauling and Joseph Rotblat, noted that all those years, marches and U.N. conferences later, the threat is greater than ever.

And people are stirring again. The peace movement has never had broader support. Once again, East-West relations are cold and angry. The U.S. and the Soviets are talking in Geneva about braking the arms race, and sustaining it at home.

Time is running out on even the chance of arms control, the scientists say, because science itself has made possible new weapons so much more accurate, so much faster, so much harder to detect that agreements may become meaningless.

There isn't much point in calling for trust. If there were trust, there would be no need for verifiable agreements, no excuse for having atomic weapons at all.

Nor has public pressure yet brought tangible response. The words are there, but who knows what they mean. Soviet Chairman Leonid Brezhnev announced a unilateral freeze on deployment of SS-20's (after the program was virtually complete). A few months later, the United States said a number of additional Soviet missiles had been deployed facing Western Europe. Moscow said that this was a lie.

There has been no explanation. The same problem weakens the call for an American pledge of "no first use" of any atomic weapon, which Mr. Brezhnev has proclaimed. How can you tell, until it's too late?

Mr. Pauling, a twinkly-eyed veteran of declarations for disarmament supported by fellow Nobel laureates, urged a unilateral freeze on all nuclear arms by both the United States and the Soviets until they get around to a binding treaty. But nobody has defined the proposal. The United States would presumably abandon not only MX, all cruise missiles and Pershings in Europe, but planned Trident submarines and Minuteman improve-

ing the nuclear shield that makes it so hard to blunt the nuclear sword. The numbers game of balancing off missile for missile to set a level of security is clearly nonsense in a world that stocks 50,000 warheads with more than a million times the power of the Hiroshima bomb.

And yet, the awesomeness of the bomb has maintained nuclear cease-fire in a world that hasn't stopped fighting since 1945. This morning's news reported on three full-scale wars (in Lebanon, Iraq and Somalia), two long, bloody guerrilla campaigns (in Northern Ireland and the Basque country) and a shattering new spy scandal in Britain. Peace is not at hand. Declarations aren't settlements.

The dilemma of fear remains. In an early attempt to confront it, President Eisenhower proposed an "open skies" program so the United States and Soviets could see for themselves what the other was doing. Moscow refused. It happened anyway, with satellites and electronic intelligence. But nobody is reassured.

So the issue comes back to information, a way to know and judge what is being prepared, in order to weigh the self-serving official counter-declarations.

One of the most hopeful ideas engaging some of the Pugwash scientists is what Australia's Sir Mark Oliphant calls "technological spying" by the middle powers. A lot of countries are now advanced enough to compete with the United States and Russia in monitoring preparations for war if they pool scientific and economic resources, though none could do it alone.

A group including delegates from Canada, Australia, France, Britain, Germany, Japan, Austria, Sweden, among others, is to meet in October to work on further details, already set out in an experts' report to the U.N. The European satellite launcher Ariane would put their own spies in the sky.

The U.S. has opposed the idea on the grounds that ambiguous intelligence could be politically abused to confound the world even more. Given experience, Washington has a point if it's to be a U.N. operation. But the countries capable of participating could set up their own structure. An objective (which doesn't mean neutral) verification of superpower agreements and menacing moves would go a long way toward easing the question of what to believe. Then, unilateral restraints could be monitored and the argument of balance better

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